

Germany Implements Temporary Border Checks To Limit Migrants

BY GEIR MOULSON
AND SHAWN POGATCHNIK
Associated Press

BERLIN — Germany introduced temporary border controls Sunday to stem the tide of thousands of refugees streaming across its frontier, sending a clear message to its European partners that it needs more help with an influx that is straining its ability to cope.

Germany is a preferred destination for many people fleeing Syria's civil war and other troubled nations in the migration crisis that has bitterly divided Europe. They have braved dangerous sea crossings in flimsy boats — another 34 drowned Sunday off Greece — and made long treks across unwelcoming countries in hopes of a better life.

More than a week ago, Germany and Austria agreed to let in migrants who had massed in Hungary, saying it was a one-time measure to ease an emergency. The flow has continued undiminished, and while Germans have remained welcoming, officials said the numbers were straining the country's ability to provide accommodations.

Berlin has become increasingly frustrated with the reluctance of many other countries in the 28-nation European Union — especially those in the former Eastern bloc — to share the burden of hosting the newcomers. Sunday's action, focusing on the Austrian border, came a day before a meeting of EU interior ministers to discuss the crisis.

"The aim of this measure is to limit the current influx to Germany and to return to orderly entry procedures," Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere told reporters. "This is also urgently necessary for security reasons."

De Maiziere added: "The great readiness to help that Germany has shown in recent weeks ... must not be overstretched."

He did not specify how long the border controls would remain in place



PAUL HACKETT/LONDON NEWS PICTURES/ZUMA PRESS/TNS
Migrants cross the border into Hungary from Serbia close to the town of Roszke on Sept. 10 in Hungary. As the EU struggles with a major migrant crisis, the European Commission has proposed that 120,000 additional asylum seekers should be shared out between members, using binding quotas.

or how exactly incoming migrants would be handled, saying only that Germany will continue to observe national and European rules on protecting refugees.

German officials didn't have further details, but in principle, border checks allow officials to turn back anyone lacking valid papers to enter.

The move, de Maiziere said, was also "a signal to Europe: Germany is facing up to its humanitarian responsibility, but the burdens connected with the large number of refugees must be distributed in solidarity within Europe."

Germany's national railway, Deutsche Bahn, said it had suspended service from Austria to Germany for 12 hours at the orders of authorities. Most new arrivals have come by train.

De Maiziere noted that Germany isn't technically responsible for most of the new arrivals, pointing to EU rules under which they are supposed to be registered and processed in the first EU country where they arrived. He urged other countries to apply those rules, and said people seeking protection cannot choose the country where they receive it.

He said Germany was reintroducing checks at its borders with an "emphasis" on the Austrian frontier. It

wasn't clear whether there would be any change at other borders.

Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka said Sunday his country has boosted the police presence on the Austrian-Czech border in reaction to the German decision. The government will assess the situation on a regular basis and will take further security measures if needed.

Passport-free travel in much of the continent under the so-called Schengen agreement is considered one of the EU's signal achievements. The agreement allows countries to reintroduce controls in exceptional circumstances, as Germany did for the Group of Seven summit in June. The European Commission said the crisis "appears to be a situation covered by the rules."

Hungarian police say more than 186,000 people have passed through Hungary from Serbia this year en route to Austria and Germany. The main point of arrival in Germany has been Munich, where officials say 63,000 people have come since the end of August, including over 12,000 on Saturday.

About 450,000 migrants have entered Germany so far this year and a total of at least 800,000 are expected for all of 2015 — by far the

most in the EU.

Many first come ashore in the EU on Greece's eastern islands after risky boat journeys. Scores have drowned making the crossing from Turkey.

Greece's coast guard said the 34 who died Sunday, including four infants and 11 older children, drowned when their wooden boat containing more than 130 people capsized near the island of Farmakonissi. Officials said the boat may have tipped over in part because of wind gusts exceeding 50 kph (30 mph). The crossing is often made more dangerous by smugglers who require asylum seekers to pilot the overloaded craft themselves in choppy seas.

Officials said 68 others were rescued while 30 more swam to the barely populated island. The survivors and the body of one child were taken to the nearby island of Leros. The other dead were being taken to Rhodes, which has autopsy facilities.

On Saturday, two other boats carrying asylum seekers capsized in the Aegean and at least five people — four children and a 20-year-old man — were presumed drowned.

Such risks have not deterred people from trying to reach Greece's eastern islands, where they pursue a more than 1,000-mile (1,600-kilometer) odyssey to the heart of Europe via the Balkans and Hungary.

But Hungarian authorities have vowed to fortify their southern frontier and — starting Tuesday — prosecute those who try to evade border police. Hungarian army engineers spent Sunday expanding the country's planned 174-kilometer (109-mile) border fence with Serbia and crowning it with coils of razor wire.

Police said 4,330 were detected crossing on foot in the previous 24 hours, more than 700 higher than the previous one-day record, as trekkers tried to reach Hungary before the tougher security measures take effect.

Fires Destroyed More Than 180 Homes

MIDDLETOWN, Calif. (AP) — Two of California's fastest-burning wildfires in decades overtook several Northern California towns, destroying more than 180 homes and sending residents fleeing Sunday on highways lined with buildings, guardrails and cars still in flames.

At least 100 homes were destroyed by a wildfire north of San Francisco in Lake County that raced through dry brush and exploded in size within hours, officials said. The devastation comes after a separate wildfire to the southeast destroyed at least 81 homes.

Residents fled from Middletown, dodging smoldering telephone poles, downed power lines and fallen trees as they drove through billowing smoke.

Whole blocks of houses were burned in parts of the town of more than 1,000 residents that lies about 20 miles north of the famed Napa Valley. On the west side of town, house after house was burned to their foundations, with only charred appliances and twisted metal garage doors still recognizable.

Firefighters on Sunday afternoon could be seen driving around flaming utility poles to put out spot fires. Homeowner Justin Galvin, 33, himself a firefighter, stood alone at his house, poking its shin-high, smoking ruins with a piece of scrap metal.

Presidential Hopefuls Take Aim At Trump

WASHINGTON (AP) — Gladiator season may have arrived in the fight for the Republican nomination.

Three days before the next Republican presidential debate, signs abound that some rivals of billionaire developer Donald Trump are taking direct aim at his decisive lead with attacks on his divisive rhetoric and vague policy.

"There will probably be more elbows thrown at that debate," Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union."

The field would narrow, he added: "There's not enough hard cash to go around to pay campaigns in these states in order to keep 17 candidates alive."

From the campaign to cable television, some of Trump's rivals are testing ways to hobble his bid, since the mogul's own bombast and lack of policy details have not.

Kim Davis 'Poor Choice For A Hero'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Kentucky clerk Kim Davis has become a hero to many conservative Christians who see her refusal to issue marriage licenses after the Supreme Court effectively legalized same-sex marriage as a litmus test for religious liberty in an increasingly secular culture.

But lost in the uproar are the voices of Christians, some equally conservative, who disagree with Davis' stance and worry that holding her out as a martyr will ultimately hurt the cause of religious liberty.

"I think she's wrong on the merits, wrong theologically and her stance is harmful to Christians both in the religious liberty debate and in trying to present Christianity to the watching world," said Peter Wehner, a Christian commentator who served in the last three Republican presidential administrations.

Many religious conservatives have shifted their focus in recent years from trying to stop the legalization of same-sex marriage to carving out protections for those who object to it on religious grounds. A Washington florist who was fined over her refusal to provide flowers for a same-sex wedding is celebrated by conservative Christian leaders across the U.S. who point to her story as an example of government overreach they fear will only grow.

But Davis' position as a government official has some of those same conservative leaders warning that she may not be the ideal figure to rally around. As Rod Dreher, a senior editor at "The American Conservative," put it in a recent essay, Davis' case is "not the hill to die on." Rather, a line in the sand should be drawn "when they start trying to tell us how to run our own religious institutions — churches, schools, hospitals, and the like — and trying to close them or otherwise destroy them for refusing to accept LGBT ideology."

Obama Struggles Gaining Israelis' Trust

JERUSALEM (AP) — Seeking to sell his nuclear deal with Iran to a skeptical Israeli public, President Barack Obama has repeatedly declared his deep affection for the Jewish state. But the feelings do not appear to be mutual.

Wide swaths of the Israeli public, particularly supporters of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have little trust in the American leader, considering him naive and even hostile. One recent poll showed less than a tenth considered him "pro-Israel."

Such misgivings bode poorly for Obama as he tries to repair ties with Israel in the final year of his presidency, and they would certainly complicate any renewed effort at brokering peace between Israel and its neighbors — once a major Obama ambition.

The tense personal relationship between Netanyahu and Obama are certainly a factor in the poor state of affairs, and Netanyahu has made a number of missteps that have contributed to the tensions.

On a trip to the White House in 2011, the Israeli leader appeared to lecture Obama on the pitfalls of Mideast peacemaking.

Netanyahu has close ties to the billionaire Republican donor Sheldon Adelson, and during the 2012 presidential race, Netanyahu appeared to favor Obama's challenger, Mitt Romney.

Fourth Inmate Dies After Prisoner Clash

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Three inmates were stabbed to death during an attack or fight at an Oklahoma prison and a fourth died of his injuries overnight, an official said Sunday.

The violence erupted at around 4 p.m. Saturday at the Cimarron Correctional Facility in Cushing, a community between the state's two largest cities, Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

A preliminary investigation determined that the stabbings apparently happened in quick succession while the inmates at a medium-security wing of the prison were being let out of their cells into the exercise yard, said Terri Watkins, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Corrections. She said investigators were still trying to determine what caused the violence.

"The entire stabbing incident happened over a couple of minutes," Watkins said, adding that prisoners were all locked in their cells within 40 minutes of the outbreak of violence.

No prison staff were injured or involved in the attack, Watkins said. None of the prisoners' names were released because their families had to be notified first, she said.

Pilgrims Traumatized, Asking How Mecca Crane Could Collapse

BY AYA BATRAWY
Associated Press

MECCA, Saudi Arabia — Jumaa Ibrahim and his wife Hasnaa Karam, a Syrian couple in their early 60s, arrived in Mecca on Friday, and headed straight to Islam's holiest site, the cube-shaped Kaaba.

It had begun to rain in the ancient desert city. Karam, who had waited a lifetime to make the pilgrimage to stand before the Kaaba, stood with her palms facing toward the sky in prayer. Ibrahim stood a few feet to her side, quietly reading verses from the Quran.

Suddenly, a loud boom echoed. Karam found herself surrounded by carnage — body parts were scattered everywhere amid pools of blood on the white marble floor of the mosque.

The kingdom's Civil Defense says unusually strong winds tipped over one of the massive cranes around the Grand Mosque that houses the Kaaba. The crane crashed through part of the mosque's roof and upper floors, sending concrete slabs crashing down.

"I saw a head, legs, blood, dead people," Karam said Sunday, interviewed at her husband's bedside in Mecca's Al-Noor Specialist Hospital. "We started saying 'Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar' as the rain poured down."

She escaped injury, but her husband was among the hundreds injured, his leg broken in two parts. The death toll reached 111 on Sunday as more of the injured died. The Health Ministry on Sunday said 394 people were treated at medi-

cal facilities after the crane collapse, and 158 of the injured remain hospitalized.

Ayman Shaaban, the owner of a hajj tour company in Egypt, was praying on the ground floor of the Grand Mosque when the crane collapsed. He says he was tossed some 20 meters (66 feet). He was immediately rushed into a large room with other injured people, the right side of his face broken, bloodied and swollen, unable to open his left eye.

Saudi media reported that a committee has been established to investigate the incident. It is unclear how the kingdom's Civil Defense, which led rescue operations, was able to determine that winds caused the crane's collapse. The spokesman for Civil Defense could not be immediately reached for comment.

Shaaban has questions about the cause of the accident. "Logically speaking, for a crane to fall from wind, even if there were strong winds, something doesn't add up," Shaaban said from his hospital bed. "If there is negligence, because of these souls lost, someone must be held accountable."

Such concerns indicate the sensitivity of the incident for Saudi King Salman, whose title is Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques — the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the first mosque built by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina. The king visited the Grand Mosque on Saturday and later met with some of the injured being treated at the government-run Al-Noor hospital.

The Al Saud royal family's legitimacy

is rooted in part in its claim to be the protectors of Islam's two most sacred sites that are at the center of the hajj — the pilgrimage that all Muslims are required to perform at least once in their lifetime if they are able to do so.

The accident comes just over a week before this year's hajj, which is expected to start around Sept. 21 and last four to five days. It will draw between 2 to 3 million Muslims from around the world for a series of rites in Mecca and surrounding areas that are believed to trace the footsteps of the prophets Ibrahim and Ismail, or Abraham and Ishmael as they are named in the Bible.

Officials have not yet removed the crane. An Associated Press journalist saw the Liebherr crane on Sunday, its base tipped forward and its superstructure leaning into the mosque where it struck. The Liebherr Group, a large equipment manufacturer, makes many of its cranes at a plant in Biberach an der Riss, Germany, and has its global headquarters in Switzerland.

Liebherr spokesman Kristian Kuepers said in an email to The Associated Press that the company is doing everything in its power "to help bring the accident investigation to a speedy and logical conclusion." The company said it had issued clear instructions on how the crane was to be installed and secured to protect it from winds. The company also expressed its deep sympathy for the families of the victims.

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